

**41<sup>st</sup> GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO**  
**NATIONAL STATEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**  
**(11 November 2021)**

Dear Colleagues,  
Dear Mr. President of the General Conference,  
Dear Madam Director General,  
Distinguished Guests,

It is indeed a distinct honor and pleasure for me to address you today at the 41<sup>st</sup> General Conference of UNESCO which coincides with the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of this outstanding institution of the UN System.

I would like to thank Ambassador Altay Cengizer, the previous President of the General Conference, for his dedicated service to the work of UNESCO and to our common values.

I convey my sincere congratulations to H.E. Santiago Moura, Ambassador of Brazil, on his new role as the new President of the General Conference, and I wish success to him.

Let me also take this opportunity to heartily congratulate Madam Director General on her re-election.

Not even two months passed after the last meeting of the General Conference, which was held two years ago, the whole world found itself in the epidemic crisis. Hereby, first of all I wish mercy to the millions of people who lost their lives because of the pandemic. I would like to express my gratitude to all healthcare workers who are fighting against the pandemic for their heroic struggle and dedication.

Unfortunately, the education was one of the sectors that greatly struck by the pandemic. In Turkey, to prevent hampering of the education processes of the children and the youth we prioritized to employ the most modern methods. We were able to provide online education in all subjects and at all grades. As of this semester, we switched to full-time face to face education. And we are committed to keeping the schools open. As Turkey, we continue our efforts to achieve SDG4 since inclusive and quality education is the fundament of our society.

Dear Colleagues; another challenge that it has begun to make its presence felt more and more with the global epidemic is climate change. Climate change exposes the whole

world to many threats, ranging from endangering food security to increasing the frequency of natural disasters, especially for the fragile states such as developing countries and small island states.

The lesson we learnt is clear: As the international community, we need to be much more prepared for any new challenge that may arise, we should act in a preventive manner against possible problems, and we should be in full cooperation and coordination in order to be able to respond effectively to the possible global emergencies.

We need to seek efficiency, since it is the right way to go. In addition to that we should bear in mind that a plainer organization does not necessarily mean a more efficient organization. In our agenda there are many programs including Priority Africa. And we have new areas like Artificial Intelligence, Open Science, and Futures Literacy. We must give the necessary importance and value to these programs that will open new horizons for us.

The new initiative of the former President directly relates to the issue of capacity building. Being aware of the necessity of responding to the increasing number of problems related to the protection of cultural assets in a timely manner, as well as the necessity of raising and developing conservationists all over the world as a professional group, Turkey supports this initiative and the thought behind it.

During the last five years, the Archeological Site of Ani, Aphrodisias, the Göbeklitepe site and this year, the Arslantepe Mound were inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Turkey. Göbeklitepe dates back to 12 thousand years ago and as such, it is the oldest site ever. Let me tell you that our excavations in the Göbeklitepe site are continued, and we are meticulously completing the archeological work to share our findings with the World.

UNESCO is becoming a more important institution day by day. As it has been pointed out many times in the past, if UNESCO ceased to exist, the world would need to recreate it.

So, we are like to have this precious organization that produce knowledge and act upon it.

Next week we will have the elections for the UNESCO Executive Board.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the member countries of the Executive Board, who have completed their mandate, for their contributions that enriched our approach and thoughts.

You have witnessed the devoted work and performance that Turkey has displayed during the period of 2017-2021 as a member of the Executive Board. Now, we kindly ask for your support for our second term candidacy for the 2021-2025 period.

Turkey, as a country that is strongly devoted to the promotion and strengthening of world heritage, has also announced her candidature to the World Heritage Committee for the term 2023-2027.

On behalf of my country, I would like to express that we will highly appreciate your kind support for this candidature as well.

I thank you sincerely and wish a successful working period until the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Conference.

I would like to conclude my words by reaffirming Turkey's commitment to UNESCO's ideals and goals in the year of its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.